



Customer Story

Education Industry

Education

College pioneers BYOD with Ericom to advance student learning and quality of teaching



“Ericom gave us what we wanted for around 40% of the cost of deploying a similar Citrix solution. PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView offered us a stable and uniform platform for delivering ICT services to teachers and pupils then, and plenty of options for the longer term.”

David Nettleship
Network Manager
Futures Community College



Technology is fundamental to the way in which young people learn — and as technology evolves, so too must education. Futures Community College has used Ericom’s PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView solution for more than five years to repeatedly extend and develop the role of IT in teaching and learning.

Most recently, this pioneering college has become one of the first schools in the country to successfully adopt Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) computing. Through this approach, the college is helping pupils to engage more effectively in lessons, improving the quality of teaching and raising overall standards of attainment.

INDUSTRY

Education

CUSTOMER

Futures Community College

PRODUCT

Ericom® PowerTerm® WebConnect RemoteView

CHALLENGES

- Extend the use of IT to improve pupils’ learning
- Improve the performance of aging PCs
- Make applications and data accessible to pupils and teachers at school and home
- Reduce the cost of building and supporting an IT infrastructure for the college
- Facilitate the implementation of a BYOD strategy

SOLUTION

- Deploy Ericom’s PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView
- Centrally deliver applications and data to school-based computers, homes and devices owned by pupils and teachers

BENEFITS

- Effective delivery of IT to support improved teaching and learning
- Performance of old PCs dramatically improved, extending their life by three years
- Easy access to applications and work for pupils and teachers from any device and any location
- Time and cost savings in the IT department
- A robust and secure platform for supporting 150+ BYOD users

“Ericom creates one world for all devices.”

Futures Community College is a fitting name for a college that constantly looks to the future. Driven by its ambition to create a world class learning environment, it has enthusiastically embraced technology and become a forerunner in an up-and-coming new IT trend.

A STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE

Just six years ago, Futures Community College faced conflicting pressures and was caught in a situation that will be familiar to many education providers. Across its campus, it had around 600 aging desktop computers that delivered unsatisfactory performance; the government was promoting wider use of IT in the curriculum; and yet limited funds were available in the IT budget for the new computers needed.

Most of the college's desktop computers were over four years old, overdue for replacement, and their poor performance was having an undesirable impact on lessons. "The slow-running PCs frustrated pupils and contributed to behavioural issues within the classrooms," recalls David Nettleship, network manager at Futures Community College.

The college took a fresh look at its entire IT provision and came up with a long-term strategy, at a price it could afford. Rather than just considering the current requirements of students and teachers, the IT department looked ahead and decided to put a new IT infrastructure in place that would give it the flexibility to adapt to new requirements in the future. This decision paved the way for the college to embrace new IT developments very easily, as they emerged.

Back in 2007, Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) was only a concept.

By 2011, many teachers and students at Futures Community College wanted to bring their own iPads, smart phones and other mobile devices into the classroom and to connect to the college systems. Futures Community College immediately recognised that this trend could have a big impact on pupils' success. "Not all pupils learn in the same way," Nettleship says. "We wanted to give pupils the opportunity to expand their learning, using whatever devices they prefer."

REDUCED CAPITAL AND OPERATIONAL COSTS

Futures Community College considered a range of options before selecting Ericom PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView, which both met the college's technical requirements and provided tremendous value for money. "Ericom ticked all the boxes and gave us what we wanted for around 40% of the cost of deploying a similar Citrix solution," Nettleship says.

Futures Community College was able to offload all of the applications from its existing desktop PCs onto a central system, significantly improving the processing speed of the PCs and increasing life of its aging estate for a further three years in certain parts of the college – seven years in total," Nettleship says.

Gradually, the college upgraded its computers, and today its IT environment includes 65 thin client computers for administrative staff,

30 thin clients for pupils, 120 Samsung and HP Netbooks that roam around the college, 400 desktop PCs, most of which are located in IT suites, and around 90 BYOD devices including smart phones and tablets. Staff and pupils alike use these computing devices while on campus to access college systems, applications and file storage via the PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView portal.

The college's IT team considers the PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView environment to be very easy and economical to support and maintain. The team can publish and stream applications without having to physically visit each computer, ensuring high availability while keeping IT support costs down. "This saves many hours of effort," explains Nettleship.

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A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING

The use of PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView has helped to improve pupils' learning in more ways than one. It has improved the quality of teaching in lessons, by accelerating the performance of the college's old PCs. Computers that used to frustrate pupils by running slowly now worked much more quickly, so pupils could engage in lessons fully and complete IT-based tasks during lessons more successfully.



Today, Futures Community College has a larger estate of computers, accessible to all of its 1,200 pupils. The consistency and reliability of the PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView environment allows teachers to incorporate IT into their teaching more extensively and effectively, to help pupils learn. "We have been very pleased with the reliability and performance of PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView," Nettleship says.

Futures Community College has expanded the solution to make it possible for teachers and pupils to access college applications and files remotely from home. "There have been surveys conducted at other schools in the UK that prove that many pupils continue learning outside of school rather than just within," Nettleship says. "We believe that this helps to improve their learning. Learning does not just start and finish in the classroom."

Recently, Futures Community College upgraded its server infrastructure and wireless network, which even enables wireless connectivity on its sports field for the first time. PE teachers can now use mobile devices to connect to RemoteView and show videos of match tactics during games lessons. This is, therefore, another example of how PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView is being used at the college to improve learning.

A PIONEER OF BYOD

Over more than five years, PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView has enabled the college to keep pace with changing trends in both IT and education. BYOD is a perfect illustration of this. Futures Community College was one of the first educational institutions in the



UK to recognise the huge value of allowing pupils and teachers to bring their own devices into colleges. "Students will be more engaged in lessons if they have their own devices with them," says Nettleship. "Equally, teachers can be more motivated to create interesting IT-based content for their lessons using their own devices and this can improve the quality of teaching."

PowerTerm WebConnect RemoteView is ideally suited to helping organisations facilitate a BYOD strategy with its unique AccessNow zero client technology. Users on any device can access windows-based applications and virtual desktops using any HTML5-compatible web browser, such as Safari and Chrome. There is no special setup or configuration needed and data security is assured as no data, temp files or caches are left on the device once a session has ended. "The fact that AccessNow can talk in every language to every mobile device there is – Mac, Linux, PC, tablet and mobile device –

makes it ideal for supporting BYOD," states Nettleship. "Ericom creates one world for all devices."

So far, around 8% of pupils and 30% of teachers have elected to bring their own iPads, tablets, laptops and smart phones into the college and connect them to RemoteView, " says Nettleship." In the future more and more teachers and pupils will expect to be able to access systems and programmes from personal devices, wherever they are," he says. "The number of pupil- or teacher-owned devices in the college may increase by as much as 50% in the next three years."

Whatever the future holds for Futures Community College, Nettleship is confident that the college has an IT infrastructure that will be flexible and robust enough to deliver. The IT team benefits from a close, supportive relationship with Ericom and knows that it can turn to its IT supplier for help and advice as it rises to the next challenge in education – no matter what that might be.

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